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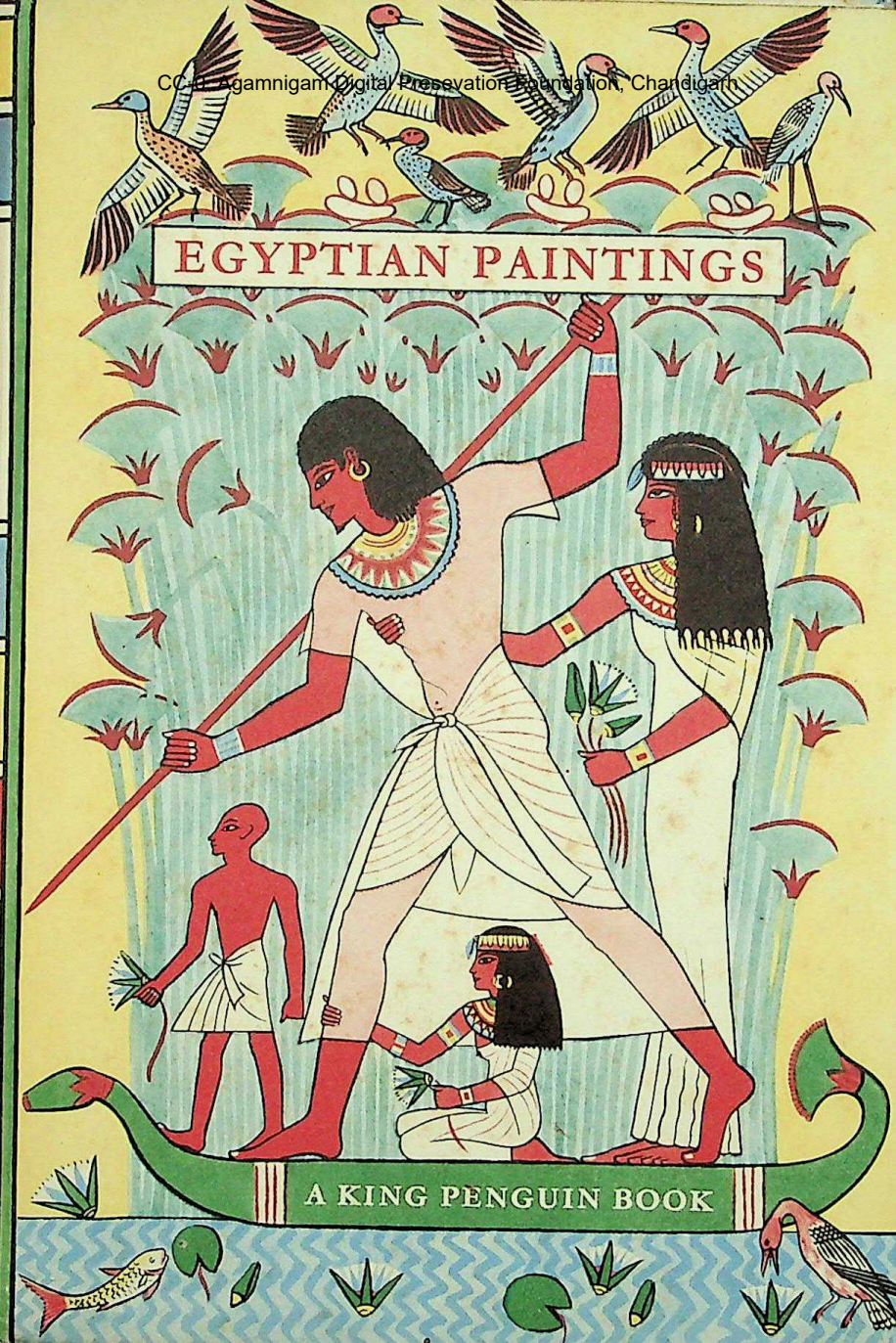

A KING PENGUIN BOOK

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Introduction

GEOGRAPHICALLY Egypt consists of the Nile valley extending from Aswân to the sea. Between the eastern and western deserts the strip of irrigated land, now widening to some miles and now shrinking to the edge of the river, stretches to Cairo where it opens out into the Delta before ending at the Mediterranean. The waters of the Nile, overflowing each year, carry the fertile silt from far south and spread it over the land, almost every inch of which is cultivated. Outside the green strip lies the desert, and on its edge, to save them from the annual inundation, the towns and villages of ancient and modern times are for the most part situated.

To this fact we owe the preservation of the antiquities of Ancient Egypt. The cemeteries, from which we derive so much of our knowledge, were excavated out of range of the moisture penetrating deeply into the soil on either side of the river.

The west bank was generally chosen for the burial places of the dead. Here they joined the setting sun on his journey through the Underworld and here the 'Goddess of the West' received them when their funeral procession crossed the Nile from the temples of the east bank and came to an end at the door of their carefully prepared 'Abode of Eternity'.

The Egyptian spared no pains to beautify these eternal homes where his spirit would continue to live and partake of the offerings of living relatives. The kings (themselves buried in pyramids or rock-cut tombs) could grant their officials no greater favour

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than a decorated tomb and rejoiced to dedicate mortuary chapels to their royal predecessors.

The monuments of Egypt are great in number and vast in scale. They extend from the Sudan to the sea and, while much has been destroyed, yet new sites are continually coming to light and adding to our knowledge of this most astonishing civilization of ancient times which reached decadence long before Greece arose. During periods of its history its empire extended as far as the Euphrates and the Sudan, and its trade with Crete, Assyria, and other countries is witnessed by the pictures of the products of those lands on tomb and temple walls.

The chief sites (excluding those temples of Ptolemaic times which do not concern us here) visited by the traveller are, first, the pyramids and sculptured tombs of Giza and Saqqâra near Cairo, belonging to the Old Kingdom (*c.* 2780–2240 B.C.), built by the great kings of that time and by their officials. Next comes Beni Ḥasan where the powerful nobles of the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 2100–1700 B.C.) cut their tombs in the cliffs and painted their walls in a cruder style with lively scenes of war and sport. Farther south, the town and necropolis of El-'Amarna, founded by the heretic king Akhenaten (1375–1358 B.C.), father-in-law of Tut'ankhamūn, reveals a new impulse in Egyptian art which tried to break with tradition and reaches an apex in the naturalistic treatment of plant and animal life. (See Plate 13.)

The neighbourhood of Luxor (named 'Thebes' by the Greek travellers) is full of monuments, mostly of the New Kingdom

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(1580–1085 B.C.). On the east bank are the temples of Luxor and Karnak. On the west extends the Theban plain where the Colossi, portraits of Amenophis III and originally part of his temple, sit looking across the Nile. Behind them are the temples on the edge of the desert – principally those of Medînet Habu and the Ramesseum. Under the western cliffs is Queen Ḥatshepsut's temple, and beside it that of her predecessor of the Middle Kingdom, Mentu-ḥotpe.

In and about this region (although some Middle Kingdom sepulchres occur) the tombs of the nobles of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties prevail (1580–1085 B.C.). It is from these that most of our illustrations are taken.

Hidden in the folds of the cliffs are excavated the burial places of the kings and queens of the New Kingdom.

Tombs of the Old Kingdom are found again at Aswân, and monuments dating from many periods continue farther south into the Sudan.

The full history of the rise and fall of the dynasties of Egypt, of her conquests and the tribute she received from foreign lands which enriched her temples and stimulated her enterprises, must be passed over here. At the height of her power her kings reigned from Nubia to the Mediterranean, and the peoples of Palestine, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia acknowledged her suzerainty. Briefly, the powerful dynasties of the Pyramid-builders of the Old Kingdom suffered eclipse at the end of the Sixth Dynasty. An intermediate period followed which is obscure (Seventh to Tenth Dynasties). This was succeeded by semi-independent local rulers. The burial places of the Eleventh

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Dynasty princes named Mentu-ḥotpe are found at Thebes. The Twelfth Dynasty monarchs reigned over all Egypt and built their pyramids at Lisht, not far south of Cairo and in the Faiyûm. Their monuments are found throughout Egypt and witness to their prosperity and power.

Another period of decline was marked by the invasion of the Semitic 'Hyksos' race. Then the Egyptian princes still ruling at Thebes drove out the invaders and founded the Seventeenth Dynasty. This was succeeded by the great Pharaohs of the New Kingdom – in their turn founding the Eighteenth Dynasty – whose capital was also at Thebes and who extended Egypt's empire to its greatest limit.

The heretic king Akhenaten – a monotheist – moved the capital to El-'Amarna but, at his death, the old worship of Amen and all the gods was restored, and the capital once more moved back to Thebes.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties were powerful under Pharaohs, many of whom bore the names of Sethos or Ramesses. The empire declined after these rulers and the influence of the priesthood supplanted that of the kings.

Succeeding conquerors of Libyan or Sudanese (Kushite) origin now ruled parts of Egypt, and an Assyrian invasion also took place.

A brief renaissance in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (*c.* 663–525 B.C.) was followed by a Persian invasion under Cambyses. The Egyptians regained their independence for short periods until Alexander included Egypt in his dominions. After his death, yet another period of Egyptian history was inaugurated by the

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Ptolemies. It lasted until the Arab conquest in A.D. 641. This marked the final end of ancient Egypt except for lingering traces found in Coptic art and language.

THE MEANING OF THE PAINTINGS AND THEIR PLACE ON THE TOMB WALLS

Egyptian tombs were regarded as the homes of the dead in which the deceased owner still hoped to enjoy the delights of his earthly life. Hence his occupations, agriculture, fishing, official duties for the king, as well as his pastimes of sport, music, dancing, and feasting were painted or sculptured on the walls. His spirit-soul could enter, by the aid of magic formulae, into the life of the after-world conceived in terms familiar to him when he was alive.

The inscriptions accompanying the pictures are composed of signs (hieroglyphs) which are also in themselves miniature pictures. Some are difficult to interpret from the conventionalized forms they have acquired over the long period of Egyptian history, but others, portraying gods, human beings, animals, birds, and insects are elaborately detailed and closely related to nature in the best work (Figure 1).

It is not in the temples whose vast walls are covered with representations of rites before the gods and tribute dedicated to them, or battle-scenes where the king destroys his foes and brings back booty for the glory of the deity, nor in the immense rock-cut tombs of the kings and queens at Thebes

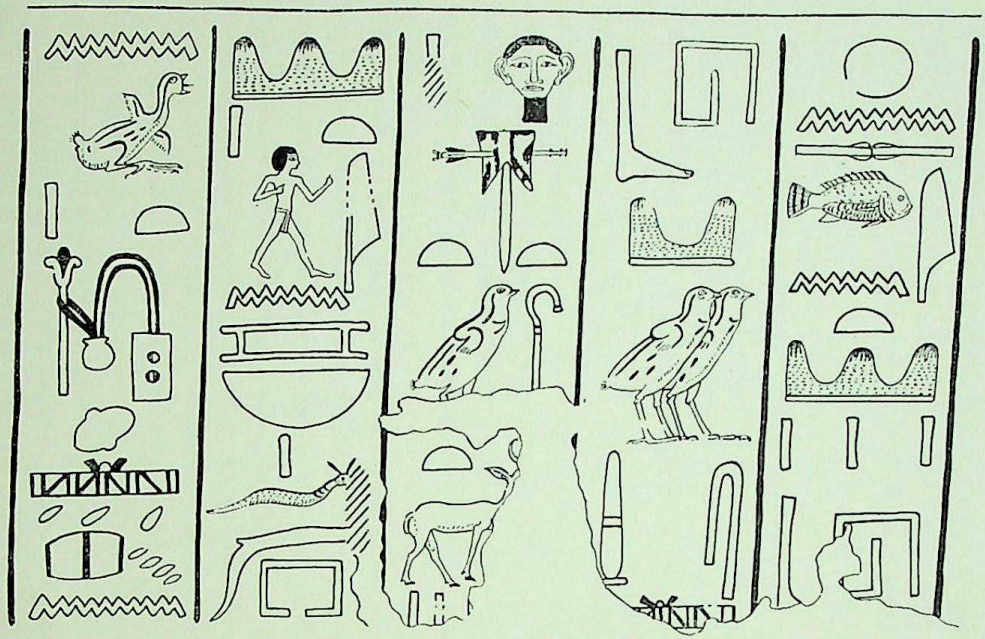

FIGURE 1. *An Example of Hieroglyphic Writing*

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and elsewhere that we find the intimate life of the people preserved.

To see this we must go to the tombs of private individuals – or rather officials – for any man of note was a functionary under the king or a member of the hierarchy. We find viziers (next in authority below the Pharaoh), viceroys of Nubia, mayors of towns, chancellors, judges, chief stewards, captains of troops, scribes, and overseers of estates, of workshops, of the treasury, and a host of other scribes for the keeping of accounts. All play their part in the complicated administration of the kingdom. Some 'outline draughtsmen' and 'sculptors' also have their tombs preserved – as indeed is fitting. The above list enumerates only a fraction of the officials whose functions are recorded and ignores the many priestly grades.

Women, too, were often priestesses, and 'songstress' or 'musician' is a common title. The epithets 'foster-mother of the king', and 'royal favourite', are also recorded.

Not all the space on the walls of the tomb-chambers was devoted to scenes of daily life; funerary rites also had their place. These are but sparsely shown in the Old Kingdom. In the New Kingdom at Thebes, however (Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties), the typical tombs have their scenes arranged as follows. Pictures of temporal life are in the first chamber extending to right and left of the entrance; the funeral procession and ritual is in the passage leading down the axis of the tomb; this ends in a shrine on the back (west) wall. The statues of the deceased and his wife here faced the spectator. More ritual scenes are on the adjoining walls.

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CONVENTIONS FOLLOWED BY THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ARTISTS

Those unfamiliar with Egyptian art may find it difficult to appreciate its conscious conventions. Perspective is ignored except in a few rare instances. When a full face is drawn the eyes are correctly shown, but the same position is assigned to them in the far more general view of the side face; shoulders have a frontal aspect while the rest of the body is drawn sideways.

Strict rules handed down from earliest times governed the representation of the human form, and these especially apply to deities, kings, and owners of tombs. Principal figures are drawn larger than the rest to show their greater importance in the scenes.

More freedom was allowed when peasants or humble persons were concerned, and particularly in the depiction of animal and bird life.

In the freely-flowing lines of preliminary sketches and in the charmingly unconventional brush drawings on limestone flakes – evidently the product of leisure hours – we find unexpected escape from the trammels imposed on finished work.

What we have to bear in mind is that there were certain standards from which the artist could only break away at times, and, while acknowledging the definite limitations of his art as it appears to our generation, yet remember that many of our modern artists have gone much further than the Egyptians in distorting the human form.

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THE TOMBS

Tombs not entirely underground derived their dim lighting from the doorway. They were oriented east and west – the west being the land of the setting sun and the entrance to the underworld. Hence the morning sun sent its rays down the axis of the tomb and lighted on the niches at the innermost end with their statues. There was little illumination to guide the painter at any time, and it remains a mystery how the elaborate details and fine outlines of the pictures were accomplished. Modern methods of copying involve the use of mirrors to throw light into the interiors where possible, but of course this could not apply in Ancient Egypt. In the vast tombs of the kings and queens cut deep into the rocks at Thebes, every inch of whose surfaces were covered with scenes, no daylight entered at all. Here, as in many of the tombs of the nobles, lamps must have been used. Such lamps as have been found seem, however, totally inadequate for their purpose. The colours, which have not a great range, were undoubtedly mixed in quantity and then carried down to the dark recesses and applied to the forms which convention decreed must be of such and such a tint.

The wall was first divided up into squares by a string dipped in red paint and snapped vertically and horizontally. Then the forms were sketched in black or red paint. These were filled in with colour, and finally the outlines gave precision to the whole. Decorative sculpture was finished in colour.

The ceilings were painted as well as the walls. In the

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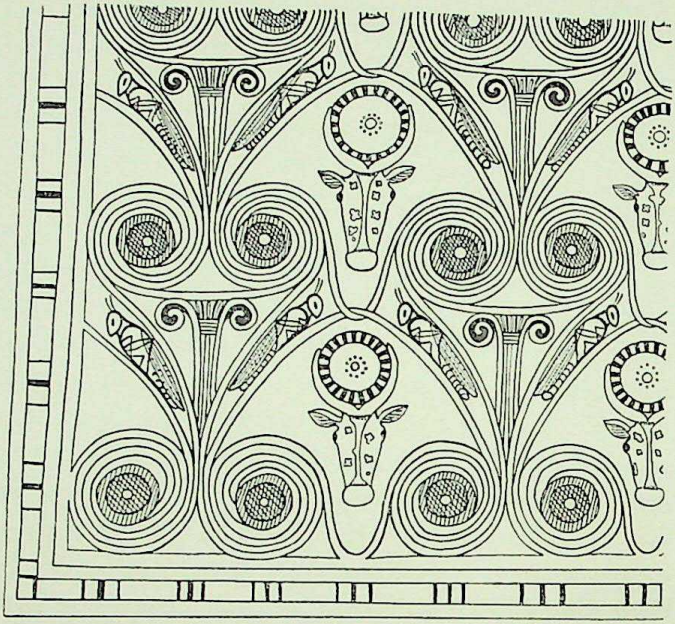

FIGURE 2. *A Ceiling Pattern*

Eighteenth Dynasty stiff geometrical patterns were divided by yellow bands bearing the name and titles of the deceased in blue. These divided the patterns into a series of panels. Later freer designs of birds, butterflies, flowers, and other motifs are common (Figure 2).

The wall-paintings were enclosed by a decorative frieze along the top; a dado of broad bands of colour at the bottom; and a narrow border up the sides. The scenes were divided by horizontal black lines.

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FIGURE 1: AN EXAMPLE OF HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

Thebes, tomb of Amenemḥēt (*c.* 1460 B.C.)

The signs are brightly coloured and drawn with great detail, forming a decorative addition to the scenes they accompany. Hundreds of such elaborately painted signs of different dimensions are to be found in the best tombs of all periods, but at Thebes the colours are more generally preserved.

FIGURE 2: A CEILING PATTERN

Thebes, tomb of Neferḥotpe (*c.* 1320 B.C.)

In place of the somewhat stiff patterns of the early part of the Eighteenth Dynasty we see here an ingeniously intricate design embodying some unusual features. A rosette is enclosed by the horns of a bull's head shown *en face*; in the interstices of interlacing whorls supported by a conventional column are grasshoppers admirably adapted for the space they fill. The background of the bull's head is red, the rest blue, while the whorls are formed of black lines against white with blue and yellow circles in the centre. The whole effect is a vivid piece of well-preserved colour.

FIGURE 3: A FAMILY PET

Thebes, the tomb of Nebamūn (*c.* 1480 B.C.)

In Plates 3 and 11 cats are pictured under chairs. This is another example of a pet seated under her mistress's chair. The animal is

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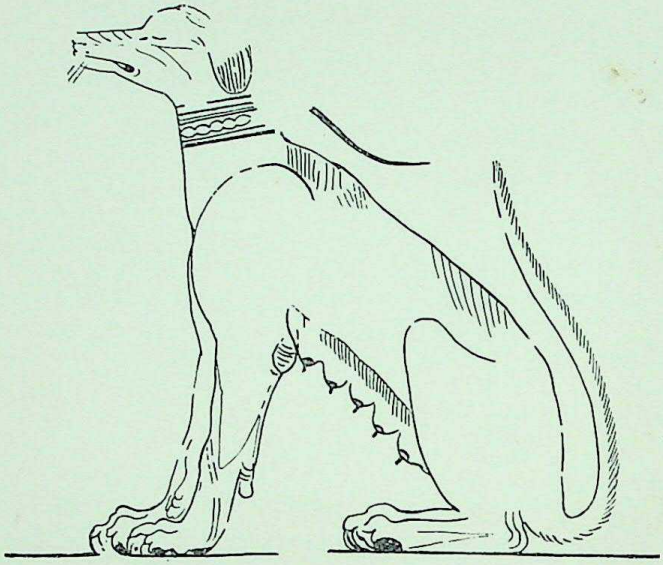

FIGURE 3. *A Family Pet*

white strongly outlined with red. Streaky orange patches underlie the fine lines on the body, and there is a solid black pad under the hind paw. The collar is yellow with a green centre bordered by black and red lines, and a red leash is attached to it. A very similar leather collar is preserved in the Cairo Museum. Dogs are generally shown wearing collars in the paintings – particularly hunting-dogs which are so often pictured helping to bring down game already wounded by the arrows of huntsmen.

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Notes on the Plates

REASONS FOR THE SELECTION

This selection of Ancient Egyptian wall-paintings has been made in order to give an impression of what the Egyptian artists could produce at their best. Since plates on such a small scale are bound to lose much of their character, it has been thought wiser in most cases to show details of scenes rather than attempt more complete subjects.

It will be seen that the skill in draughtsmanship and colouring suffers no diminution in the course of centuries. It is just as sure in the Medûm Geese of *c.* 2700 B.C. and the Birds in an Acacia Tree from Beni Ḥasan (*c.* 1920 B.C.) as in the masterpieces of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties (1580–1085 B.C.). Towards the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty, however, decadence set in, and both form and colour deteriorated.

All paintings surviving from the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms do not by any means come up to the high standard shown here, but as the purpose of this little book is primarily visual, aesthetic qualities had to be of greater importance than special historical or iconographical points.

PLATE 1A: GEESE FROM MEDÛM

Medûm, tomb of Itet; now in the Cairo Museum (*c.* 2700 B.C.

Only the right-hand portion of this long fragment is, for reasons of space, reproduced here. On the left, facing in the opposite direction, are three more geese shown in a very similar position.

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The birds are feeding along the black muddy banks edging the water, out of which clumps of flowering rushes grow.

The red-breasted goose is no longer to be found in Egypt, but the other variety is a common sight to-day along the canals fringed with similar flowering reeds.

The scene formed part of a large fowling picture, the rest of which is almost entirely destroyed.[1] It is indeed one of the very few well-preserved paintings from the Old Kingdom and can serve as an example of the height of achievement reached by Egyptian artists at so early a date. Except for minor damage the colours are as fresh as they were nearly five thousand years ago.

PLATE 1B: BIRDS IN AN ACACIA TREE

Beni Ḥasan, tomb of Khnemḥotpe (*c.* 1920 B.C.)

We owe the good preservation of this painting to the fact that it was executed high up on the walls of the tomb. It is part of a very large scene in which a clap-net – a corner of which is seen on the top right – is pulled in by a man seated behind a reed shelter – partly visible along the left of the picture.

The acacia bush is outside the edge of the pool; the zigzag lines of the water and some of the ducks appear on the bottom right. There is a hoopoe – so common to Egypt – with naturalistic colouring. Two shrikes are above and a red-backed shrike below them. The bird on the right near the ducks appears to be

1. For a reconstruction see W. S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*, Figure 61.

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a redstart but – as is common in Egyptian painting – blue is here substituted for grey.

The whole composition is exceptionally beautiful in drawing and colouring.

PLATE 2: MUSIC AT A PARTY

Thebes, tomb of Waḫ (*c.* 1460 B.C.

This picture occurs in a little tomb dating from the early Eighteenth Dynasty and is part of a banqueting scene. Although the drawing has the stiff formality of the period, yet we feel the light movement of the girls' figures as they dance to the sound of their own music. The transparent robes show the limbs and the girdle of beads. The foremost girl plays the double pipes while her companion plays the lyre. Lumps of scented fat, common to scenes of festivity, are on their heads, and on that of the seated lady guest who is offered refreshment by a serving-maid and listens to the musicians.

PLATE 3: CAT EATING A FISH

Thebes, tomb of Nakht (*c.* 1425 B.C.)

This is a larger version of the pet cat in Plate 11. Under its owner's chair it eagerly devours a fish thrown to it from the eatables provided for the feast. For all its conventionality, the feline character of the beast is admirably rendered. Egyptians were fond of pets, and a variety of animals are pictured in the tombs (see Figure 3).

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PLATE 4: AN OFFERING-BEARER

Thebes, tomb of Tjenro (*c.* 1440 B.C.)

The young man is laden with as many offerings as he can carry, and he has even hung some of the lotus flowers and buds round his neck. A wicker basket in one hand is piled with grapes, while in the other a dish of honeycombs still attracts the bees. The pendant, half-open bag shows more grapes. A fat bull, flower-decked for sacrifice, and secured by a rope, is led by the man on the right.

A small restoration is indicated inside the white line where the damaged eye of the figure has been replaced.

PLATE 5: TRIBUTE OF THE DESERT

Thebes, tomb of Ḥaremḥab (*c.* 1415 B.C.)

The man carries a dish of ostrich eggs; two ostrich feathers are laid on top of them. In his other hand he holds a desert hare by the ears, while an ibex – also a desert animal – seems content to accompany him uncontrolled.

Since the scene has been exposed to light and weathering, the black (always very fugitive) has disappeared. The man's hair and eyes and the horns of the ibex, as well as the markings on his coat, would have been black. All that is now left is the red and yellow ochre (the most permanent of colours) and the red sketch-lines which underlay the finished painting.

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PLATE 6: VINTAGERS AND BIRD-CATCHERS

Thebes, tomb of Nakht (*c.* 1425 B.C.)

Above, on the right, men are gathering grapes from a conventionalized trellis. The berries are then seen in what looks like a stone trough surmounted by a light superstructure from which hang boughs for shade and ropes to help the five men to keep their balance while they are treading out the juice. The liquid runs out of a spout into a smaller trough, is transferred by a peasant into the jars above, and stoppered by mud sealings. Below, a clap-net full of wild-fowl is being pulled out from the papyrus-swamp. Under a shelter a man cleans the birds on a stand while another plucks them preparatory to potting them in the jars close by.

PLATE 7: HARVEST SCENE

Thebes, tomb of Menna (*c.* 1415 B.C.)

Above, Menna a 'Scribe of the Lord of the Two Lands' (*i.e.* the king) stands within a light shelter while a servant brings him refreshment in two jars enclosed in string nets. He is superintending the activities of the harvest. Corn is being winnowed and the grain swept up into heaps. Below, a previous episode shows the reaped ears of corn carried away in paniers. A girl holds a jar with drink for the harvesters, while two female gleaners who have quarrelled throw down their baskets to pull one another's hair. A tired labourer sleeps in the shade of a tree on the right.

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PLATE 8: HORSES AND MULES AT THE HARVEST FIELD

Fragment in the British Museum from an unidentified tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty at Thebes (*c.* 1400 B.C.).

On the left an old peasant stands before the white boundary-stone marking the end of the cornfield. The chariots in charge of their grooms doubtless await the tomb-owner and another official whose figures are not preserved.

Above are two spirited horses; below, two mules, showing the typical ass's stripe on the shoulder, feed under the tree, while the charioteer has a nap.

PLATE 9: POOL IN A GARDEN

Fragment from an unidentified tomb at Thebes, now in the British Museum (*c.* 1400 B.C.)

Every Egyptian liked to have a garden, and when he died he often had a pictured one in his tomb so that, by a process of sympathetic magic, he could enjoy its delights in the next world.

The pool we see here is a detail of a larger scene in which it is surrounded by trees, and the tree-goddess is coming out of one of them with her offerings (cf. Plate 16).

A border of black mud encloses the pool, and in this grow a quantity of plants decoratively arranged in patterns such as the Egyptian artist delighted to produce (cf. Plate 13). Some cannot be identified, but clumps of red poppies and papyrus-umbels are plain. Ducks and ducklings, fish (all of one variety),

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and lotuses are carefully spaced to fill the rectangle of water and thus form a balanced composition.

PLATE 10: FOWLING IN THE MARSHES

Thebes, tomb of Nakht (*c.* 1425 B.C.)

We show here only half of the composition which is balanced on the right by a figure standing in a very similar attitude spearing fish.

Nakht and his family are pursuing the favourite sport afforded by the marshes near the Nile. He carries a throw-stick in one hand and a decoy-heron in the other, for we must imagine him as hidden amongst the reeds in his light papyrus skiff. The women cling to his legs lest he should overbalance himself. A young son holds a spare stick and has already retrieved a duck. A dragonfly and a butterfly are to be seen amongst the nests, and the startled birds rise above the papyrus plants which grow out of the blue water.

PLATE 11: GUESTS AT A FEAST

Thebes, tomb of Nebamūn and Ipuky (*c.* 1390 B.C.)

Festival scenes are very common subjects in the tombs, for eating, drinking, and sport were the chief recreations in the life of an Ancient Egyptian. It is, however, not always easy to distinguish whether it is a funerary banquet offered to the deceased, or one partaken of during the lifetime of the owner of the tomb and his friends.

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Above, the male guests are primly seated on stools underneath which are little bowls on stands – all on a green rush mat. The foremost individual has a very special stool with feet ending in ducks' heads and a skin thrown over the seat. Two maidens are tying on his necklace of flower-petals, and offering something in a dish, respectively.

Below, the lady guests are waited on, and here, by contrast, the girls are nude except for bead girdles and necklaces.

The pair on the left are getting lumps of scented fat placed on their heads (cf. Plate 2), while their pet cat sits under the chair. The three ladies together have their feet on a grained wooden stool, and receive drink and flowers from the waitress appropriately provided with a napkin over her hand.[1]

PLATE 12: MOURNING WOMEN

Thebes, tomb of Ra'mose (*c.* 1400 B.C.)

We have here the central group in a long procession. To the left the funeral *cortège* approaches the women who face it with gestures of grief and pour dust on their heads – just as may be seen in any Egyptian village to-day. Behind the women a row of men carry stems of flowering papyrus, incense, and libation-vessels towards the tomb on the extreme right. The women wear the streaky grey robes usual in these mourning groups, but whether this tint is due to the dust poured over them or otherwise, it is not possible to say. Note the old woman

1. All the scenes in this beautiful little tomb have lately been wantonly destroyed.

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supported by a younger one, and the small naked girl who participates in the lamentations.[1]

PLATE 13: KINGFISHER IN A LOTUS AND PAPYRUS THICKET

El-'Amarna, North Palace (*c.* 1360 B.C.)

Part of the mural decoration of a small chamber covered from floor to ceiling with realistic marsh plants springing out of the black mud on the banks of the stream below. Many birds besides the one illustrated here occur amongst the reeds.

Rows of little niches, about seven inches deep, break the surface of the walls at intervals. It may be surmised their purpose was to provide a place for drinking-vessels. The blue painted base of one can be seen above the black-and-white kingfisher who dives down towards the water and is to-day still a familiar sight by the Nile.

The red spathes of the papyrus and their feathery umbels are close to nature, as are a variety of little wild plants growing in the mud at their base. Lotus flowers appear amongst the papyrus reeds and also in the water below. The whole effect is something like a Chinese wall-paper but much less formalized. It demonstrates the free style and delicate colouring developed by the artists of El-'Amarna.[2]

1. For the whole scene see Norman de G. Davies, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose*, Plates xxiii-xxvii.

2. For the context of the scene see H. Frankfort and others, *The Mural Paintings of El-'Amarneh* (Egypt Exploration Society).

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PLATE 14: INFANT DAUGHTERS OF AKHENATEN

El-'Amarna, fragment from a house, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (*c.* 1360 B.C.)

The two children, whose only clothing is their jewellery, are seated on cushions by the side of their mother. Her sandalled feet rest on a much larger decorated stool; parts of her white robe and long red sash are also visible behind the queer egg-shaped heads of the little girls. These heads are characteristic of the Akhenaten family, but whether they are real or only a peculiarity of the artist, it is not possible for us to determine. There is certainly something of the freshness and originality in the treatment of the figures which characterizes the art of El-'Amarna.

PLATE 15: STATE BARGE OF THE VICEROY OF NUBIA

Thebes, tomb of Ḥuy (*c.* 1350 B.C.)

Nubia, at the time of Tut'ankhamūn to which this picture belongs, was subject to Egypt, and ruled by a viceroy under the king, who received (as is shown elsewhere in the tomb) tribute of gold and other products from the country. The raw materials used by the craftsmen to make Tut'ankhamūn's famous burial furniture must have largely come from this source.

The ship bears the royal standard above the decorated cabin on the right. The panels on the hull represent the Theban war-god, and the king, in the form of a sphinx, treading down his

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Negro enemies. A large cabin amidships with two doors is prolonged by a sort of covered horsebox in which are seen two red horses for the Viceroy's use in Nubia. The vessel still awaits the crew, for the landing-plank is down, the sails furled, and no steersman yet holds the long steering-oar.[1]

PLATE 16: IN A CELESTIAL GARDEN

Thebes, tomb of Userḥēt (*c.* 1300 B.C.)

The High Priest Userḥēt, with his wife and mother behind him (their relationship and names are inscribed on their arms), sit in the shade of a sycamore fig. The goddess of the tree stands before the group and pours water from a decorated vase into the cups they hold out to receive it. In her other hand she extends a pile of round cakes, figs, grapes, pomegranates, and perhaps a honeycomb, arranged on a rush mat towards Userḥēt, who avails himself of the good things she offers. Birds perch amongst the foliage while the human-headed spirit-souls of the two women hover above them. The souls of Userḥēt and his wife stand in front of the goddess, and drink water from a T-shaped pool; a basket of cakes is provided for them also.

The underlying idea is that in the next world the dead enjoy what they left behind in this – a garden where cool breezes blow and refreshment partaken of under the kind eye of the

1. For the context of the scene see Nina de G. Davies and Alan H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Ḥuy, Viceroy of Nubia*, Plate xi, Theban Tombs Series, vol. iv (Egypt Exploration Society).

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tree-goddess Nūt. The Egyptians also believed in the power of their bird-souls to fly out into the sunshine and return again to the tomb at will.

The flowing garments and superabundance of decoration is characteristic of this late period. An exceptional feature is the stippled shading of darker red on the cheeks and on the heels of the women.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Plate 3 is reproduced by kind permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. All the remaining plates come from *Ancient Egyptian Paintings*, published by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Warm thanks are due to the Oriental Institute and to Dr Alan Gardiner, who is the owner of some of the originals, for allowing the re-publication of the paintings in a King Penguin Book.

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THE PLATES

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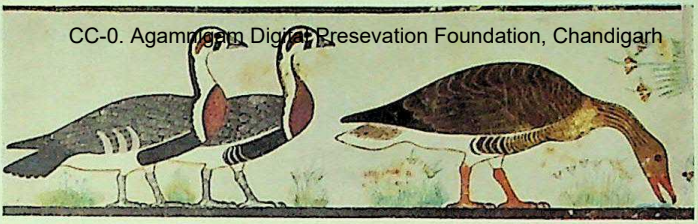

A – GEESE FROM MEDÛM

B – BIRDS IN AN ACACIA TREE

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MUSIC AT A PARTY

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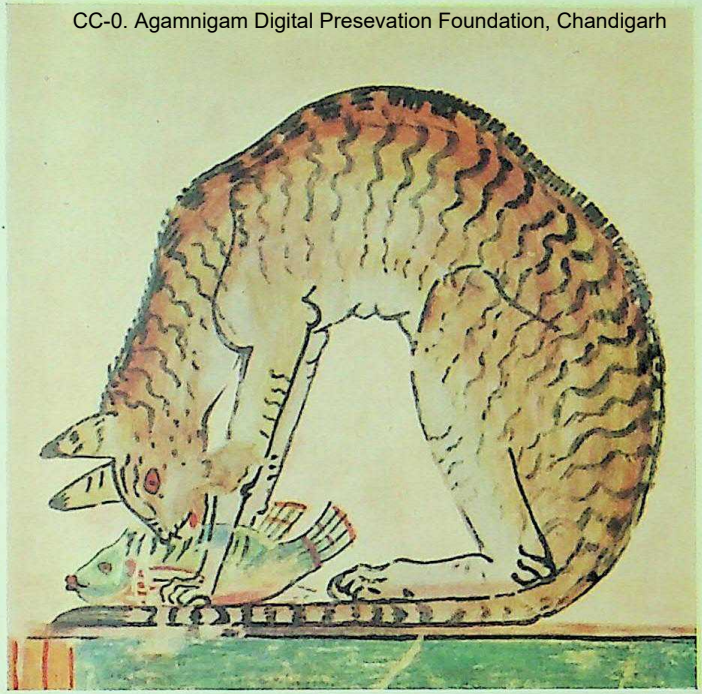

CAT EATING A FISH

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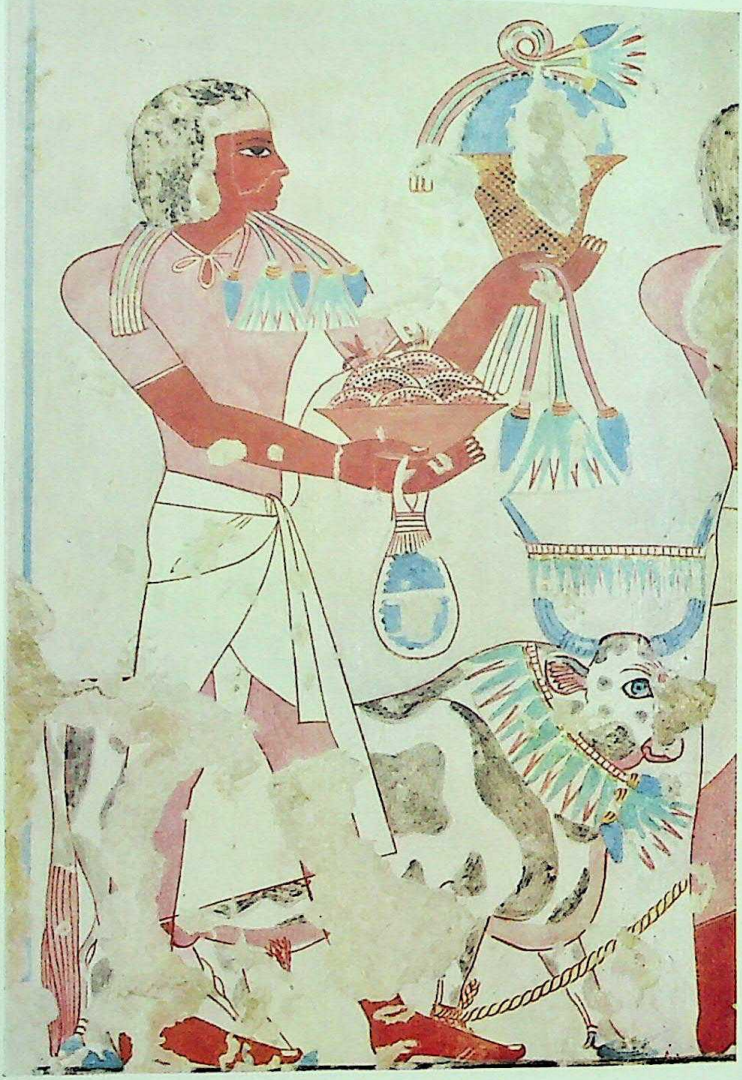

AN OFFERING-BEARER

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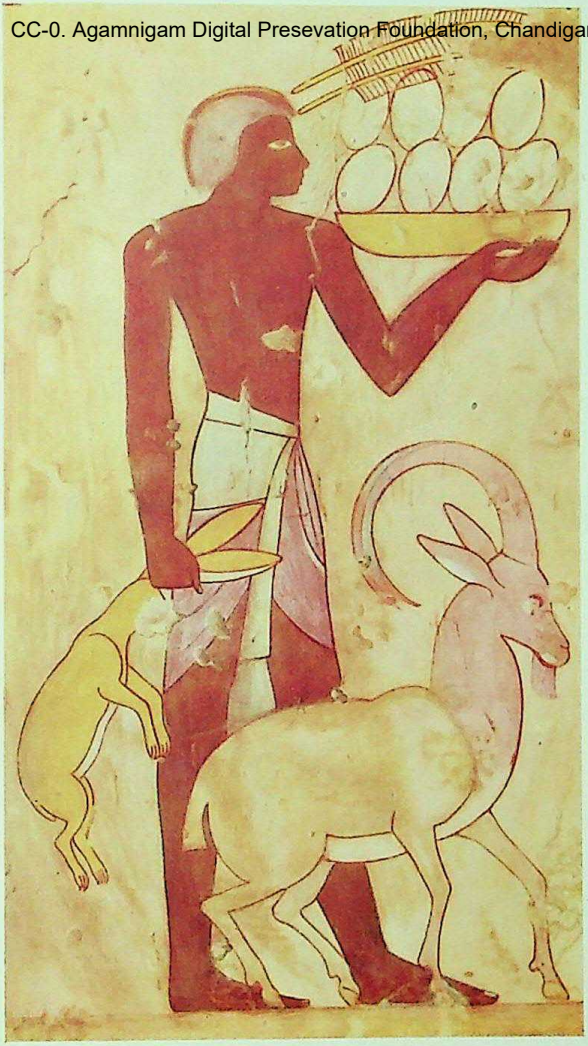

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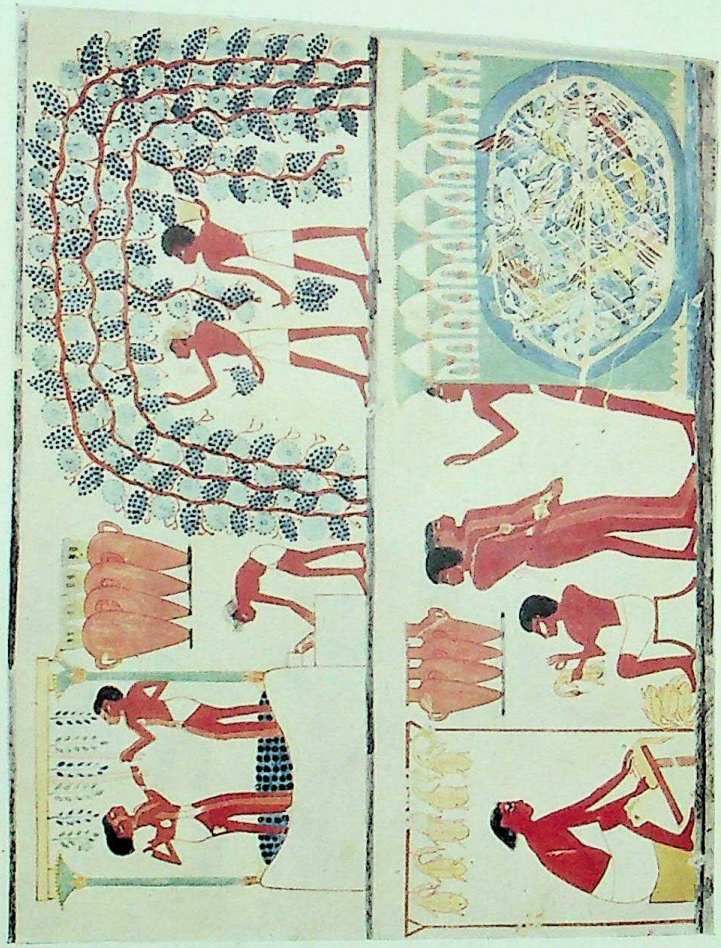

VINTAGERS AND BIRD-CATCHERS

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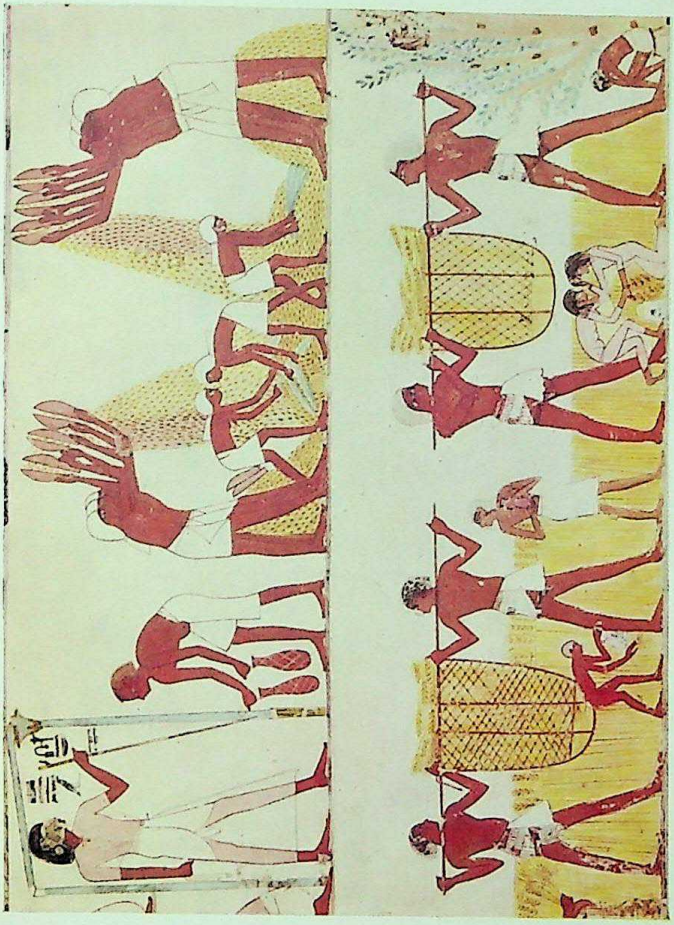

HARVEST SCENE

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HORSES AND MULES AT A HARVEST FIELD

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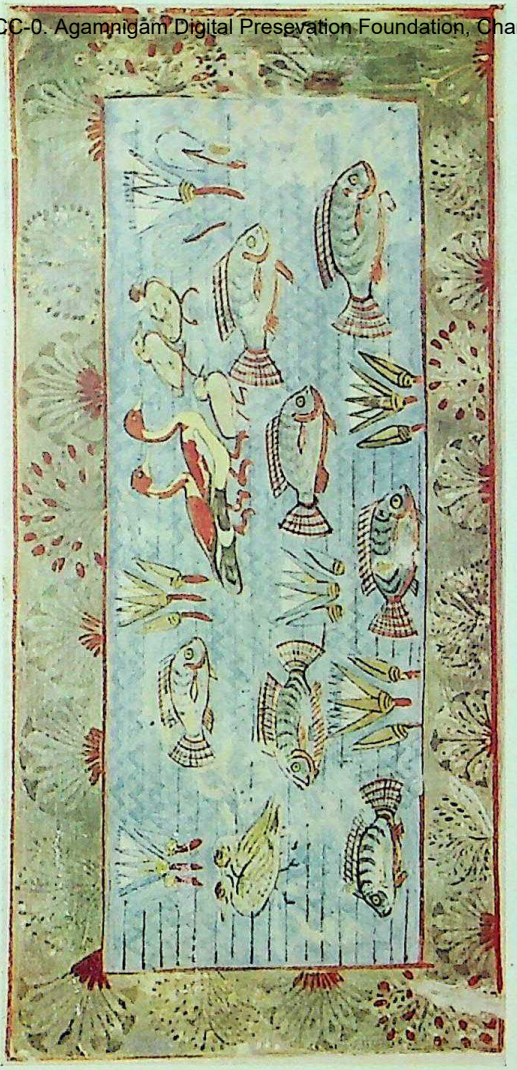

POOL IN A GARDEN

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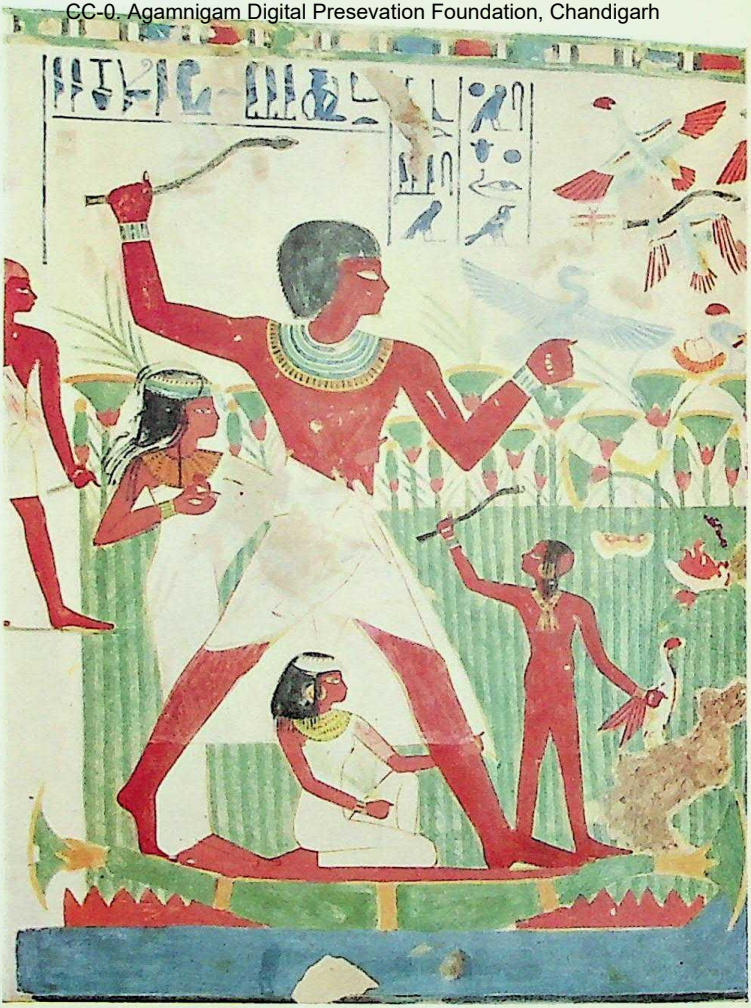

FOWLING IN THE MARSHES

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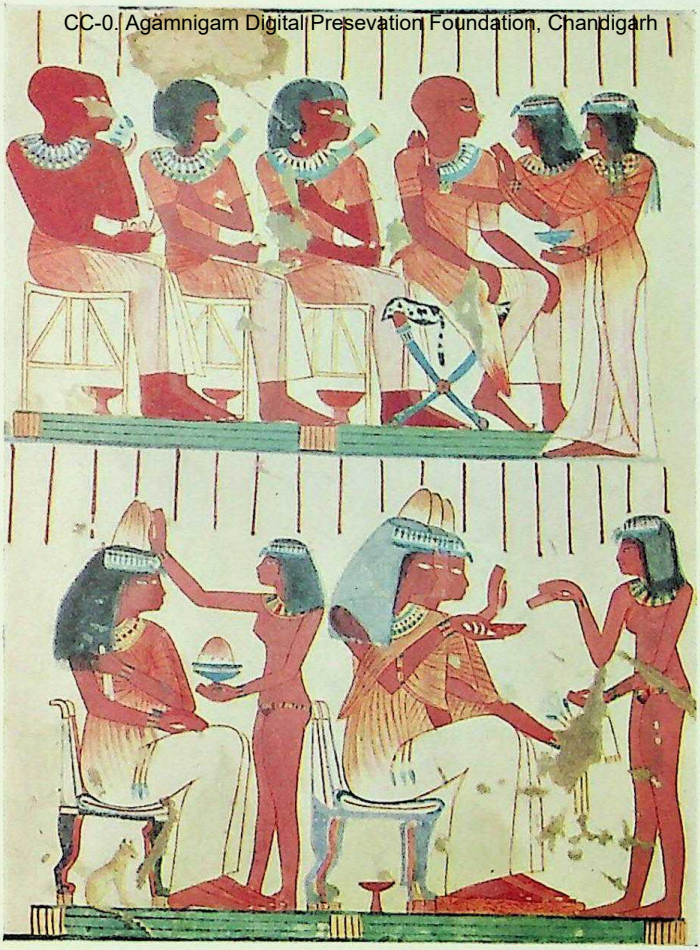

GUESTS AT A FEAST

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MOURNING WOMEN

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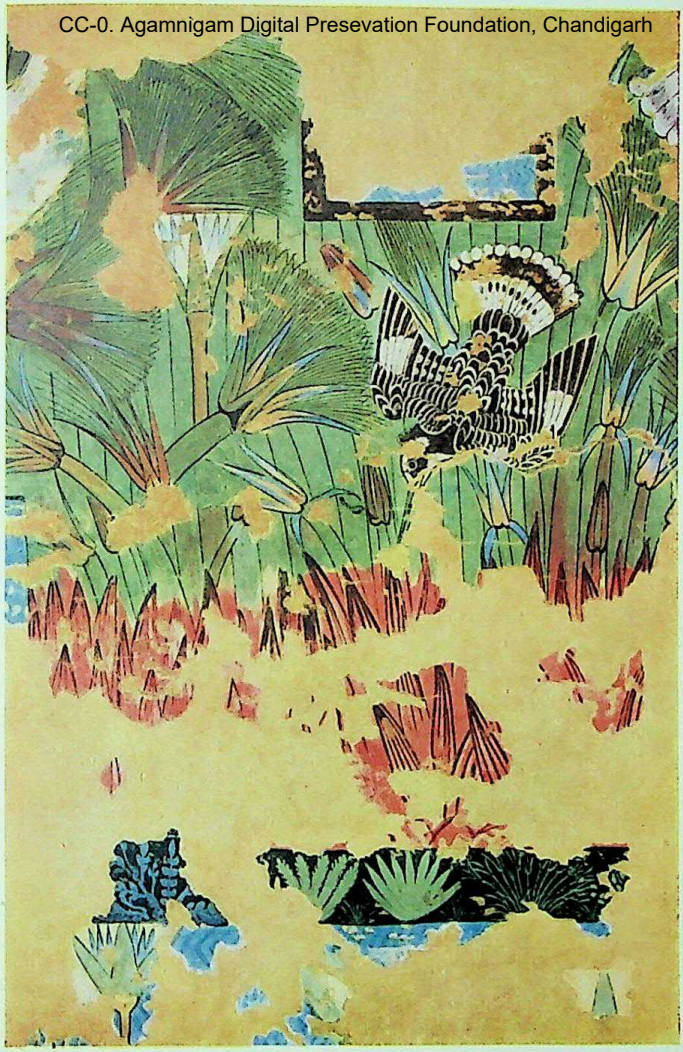

KINGFISHER IN A LOTUS AND PAPYRUS THICKET

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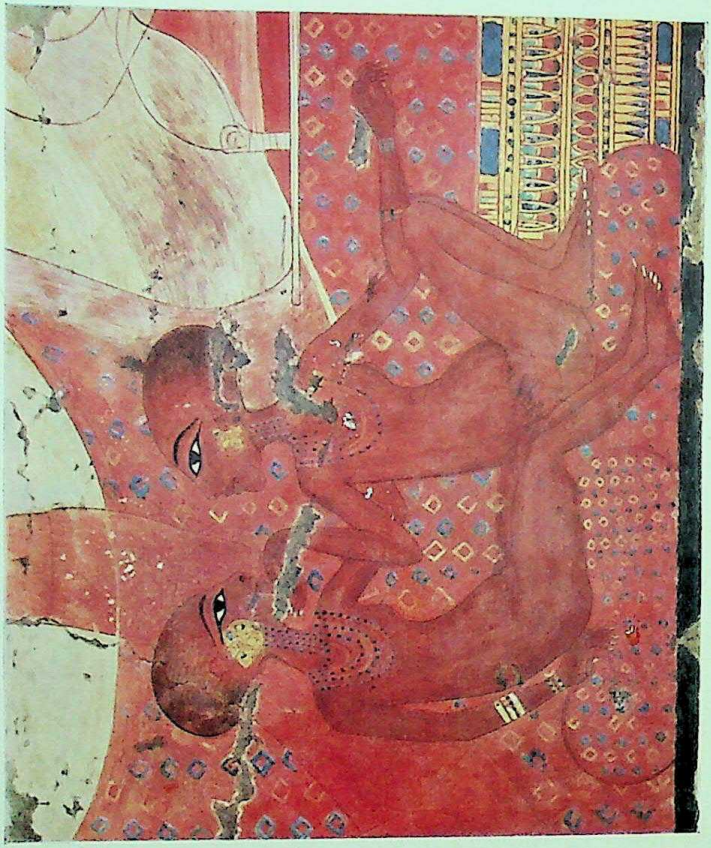

INFANT DAUGHTERS OF AKHENATEN

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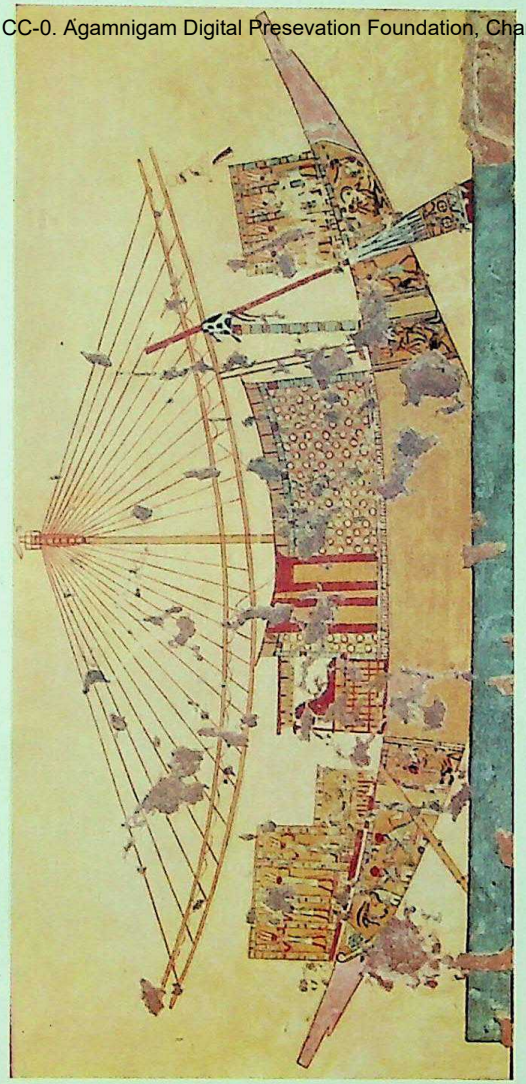

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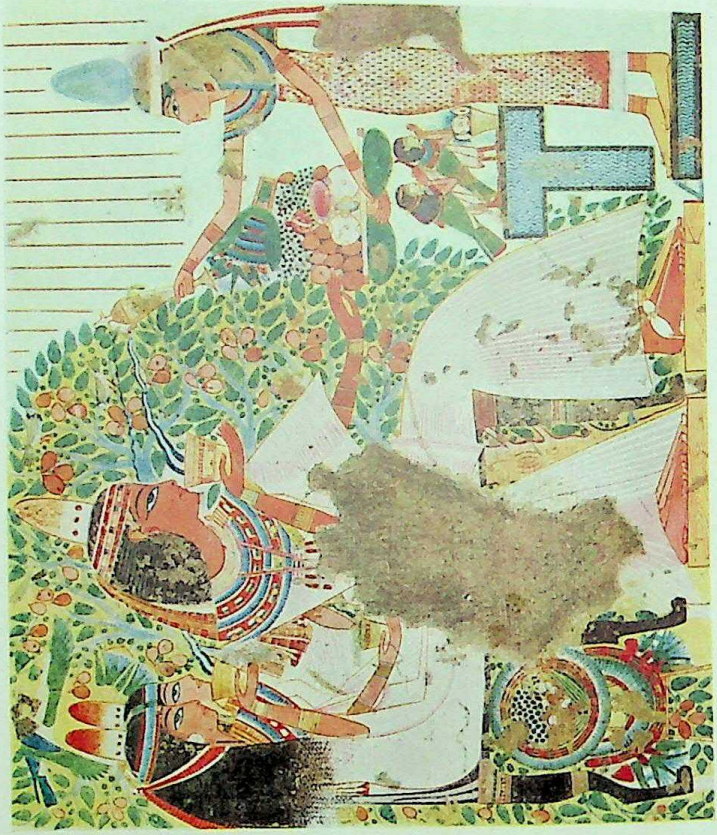

IN A CELESTIAL GARDEN

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